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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF INFORMATION

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SUBJECT: "Murder, for Weeds Only"...Information from the Plant scientists of the United States Department of Agriculture.

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Here's a report of research work that'll sound sweet to those who spend back-breaking hours weeding their lawns.

A growth regulating chemical compound, called 2,4-D has been developed by the plant scientists of the United States Department of Agriculture. When a water solution of this compound is sprayed over a lawn, it picks out certain weeds...kills them...but leaves the grass unharmed.

Dandelions and narrow-leaf plantains are certain victims of the compound. Lawn pennywort falls before it. So does chickweed, pigweed, wood sorrel, knotweed and broadleaf dock.

This compound isn't like other chemical herbicides that burn off the spots they touch. It kills a weed -- leaf, stem and root. The chemical encourages plants to grow, you see, and when it hits the broad leaves of these weeds, the leaves absorb too much of the compound. They simply knock themselves out trying to grow. The effect can be seen within a day or two after 2, 4-D has been applied. The stems and petioles undergo a severe twisting and bending -- the plant begins to yellow and after a couple of weeks, it dies.

There's a lot of variation in the way 2, 4-D affects different plants. Experiments are still going on with the compound. Scientists are trying to determine how effective it can be in fighting farm weeds. They find it isn't likely to be effective on weed grasses like crabgrass unless it's strong enough to damage desirable grasses also.

While narrow-leaf plantain succumbs readily, the broad-leaf kind seems to have more resistance to the chemical. Sheepsorrel, daisy and yarrow were also relatively resistant to the treatment.

Like so may of the new things we hear about, 2,4-D isn't available yet. So this year, we'll be using the old tried and true elbow grease method to rid our lawns of noxious weeds. Still...it is good to know that research is underfoot to make our work lighter sometime in the future. 7-5-45